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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/PGI (KUYKENDALL) AND EUR/SE

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TAGS: [KWMN](#) [PHUM](#) [CY](#)  
SUBJECT: CYPRUS: ENGAGEMENT ON WOMEN'S ISSUES

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¶1. (U) Summary: Post's work on women's issues has focused largely on programs to combat trafficking in persons (TIP), particularly the trafficking of foreign women for commercial sexual exploitation. Combating TIP is one of the Mission's four MSP goals, and our anti-TIP efforts in the Political Section are augmented by programs administered by the Bicommunal Support Program (BSP) in the Public Affairs Section. In December 2009, Ambassador Urbancic published an op-ed entitled the "16 Days Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign" that was carried by the major local newspapers. There is ample room for additional cooperation between the USG and Cyprus on other women's issues, such as supporting greater leadership roles for women in politics and business, combating domestic violence, and protecting the rights of migrant women. End summary.

¶2. (U) Through the BSP, supported by Congressional Economic Support Funds "aimed at reunification of the island and designed to reduce tensions and promote peace and cooperation between the two communities on Cyprus," Embassy Nicosia has worked with civil society in both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities to combat TIP. Since 2005, BSP has funded several bicommunal TIP conferences, conducted capacity-building training for NGOs, funded research on best practices related to anti-TIP legislation, and supported public awareness-raising campaigns on TIP. Most recently, the Embassy organized a three-day event in June 2009 entitled "Combating Human Trafficking: Time to Act," which brought together diplomatic missions, local and regional NGOs, filmmakers and academics to discuss best practices in legislation and services for trafficking victims. Participants included representatives from the International Organization for Migration, La Strada, the A21 campaign, the British High Commission, and the Turkish Cypriot Human Rights Foundation.

¶3. (U) Two other sections of the Embassy are also addressing women's issues. Through USAID's Action for Cooperation and Trust (ACT) Project, the Embassy is commissioning a study to examine the role of women in the peacebuilding process in Cyprus. The current negotiating team in UN-facilitated talks to reunify the island, including the leaders of the two communities and the large majority of their advisors, are all men. The Embassy's Economic/Commercial Section is organizing a conference on franchising opportunities to be held later this year and plans to invite the International Franchise Association's Women's Franchise Committee to participate in the event.

¶4. (U) Women are underrepresented in government throughout the island. There are seven women serving in the 56-member Parliament of the Republic of Cyprus, representing 12.5% of the legislature. In the Turkish Cypriot community, four out of 50 (8%) members of "Parliament" are women. With the exceptions of Nicosia Mayor Eleni Mavrou and Minister of Labor and Social Insurance Sotiroulla Charalambous, there are few women in positions of power in local or national

political office. This disparity was acknowledged in a 2006 National Report on "Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion" prepared by the Ministry of Justice, which noted: "There is no doubt that the prevailing culture in all social and political structures and processes is not conducive to gender equality. The low percentage of women in key decision-making positions makes things just more difficult. The glass ceiling still remains an important obstacle to women participating in decision-making posts."

¶5. (U) There is ample room for additional cooperation between the USG and Cyprus on issues of common concern related to women's rights. Cyprus-relevant themes to explore include combating domestic violence and protecting the rights of migrant women, two subjects that have recently emerged in the Cypriot media as issues of social concern. In a press report from September 2009, five local NGOs accused Cyprus of deliberately minimizing the number of domestic violence victims by failing to collect accurate data under EU definitions. By the NGOs' estimate, 80,000 Greek Cypriot women are directly subjected to domestic violence, as are 4,000 foreign housemaids who are alleged to suffer violence at the hands of their employers. Another NGO, the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, highlighted the unique needs and vulnerabilities of around 35,000 legal migrant women who undertake "gendered work," which pays less and is considered low-skill. As the Minister of Labor herself recently remarked, women who migrate to Cyprus "face a double discrimination based on gender and ethnicity."

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